SENTIMENT, GENRE, AND TALE TYPOLOGY: MEANING IN MIDDLE EASTERN AND AFRICAN TALES*

Hasan M. El-Shamy

Students of tradition-bound cultures have sought to establish the meaning (or meanings) embodied in given aspects of lore. A number of theoretical constructs have been developed[1] and applied to broad and diverse segments of traditional cultural expressions; a variety of conclusions concerning the real meaning of an item of lore was reached on the basis of these "theories." However, an examination of a number of studies on the nature of the meaning of specific Middle Eastern and related sub-Saharan African texts (AaTh 326, AaTh 756C and 751D*, AaTh 91, and AaTh 911*) indicates that in the absence of consistent research methodology these interpretations are often subjective and lack verification. In some instances one interpretation may seem as plausible as its theoretical rival.[2]

The present study seeks to demonstrate that the meaning of an aspect of a tale is a part of a cognitive-behavioristic system whose components can be subject to verification. Such a system includes the expressed intent and sentiments of the narrator and audience, socio-cultural and other relevant factors, and the verbatim text involved and its variants; it also includes the academic postulates pertaining to that text as perceived by the interpreter. Sentiments and other types of affective experiences are shown to be central constituents of a narrative. As perceived by the narrator and audience, these feelings add meaning to the structure of a tale by providing a sense of direction around which the tale coheres; they also strongly influence the meaning of the plot, through their association with social processes (e.g., cooperation, competition, conflict) among the protagonists in a tale.

The degree of validity of a certain interpretation depends on whether that interpretation demonstrates such systemic qualities as consonance (i.e., being in agreement with other components of the system), consistency (i.e., being applicable in other pertinent situations), and stability (i.e., exhibiting the same basic characteristics over a period of time).[3]

---

*Published in: *al-Ma'thûrât al-Sha`biyyah*, Vol. 1, no. 3, (Doha, Qatar, 1986), pp. 41-52.

*Original pagination is indicated within angular brackets: <>: e.g., <42> = p. 42 in the 1986 original.

*Paper read at the 8th Congress for the International Society for Folk Narrative Research. See: *Papers III. [Proceedings of] the 8th Congress for the International Society for Folk Narrative Research*, R. Kvideland and T. Selberg, eds., pp. 255-283 (Bergen, Norway, 1985). (Revised and expanded--data related to note no. 14 added to the 1986 edition).

Designations of tale-types are made according to Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson, *The Types of The Folktale*. (*FFC* No. 184, Helsinki, 1961), abbreviated here as: AaTh.

[1] For a general survey of these "theories" see R.M. Dorson, "Current Theories of Folklore," in: *Folklore and Folklife: an Introduction*, R.M. Dorson, ed., (Chicago, 1972) pp. 7-47.

[2] See note 4 below.

[3] For elaboration on the systemic qualities of a folktale, see Hasan M. El-Shamy, *Brother and Sister,*

The first study deals with the meaning of a Turkish, Middle Eastern tale from a psychoanalytic perspective; Hasan El-Shamy used the text of the tale to present and illustrate the main theoretical postulates of the Freudian approach.[4] The symbolic significance of kinship ties, objects, and acts involved in the tale were assumed to reveal the contents of the narrator's subconscious, and consequently, that of Middle Easterners in general and Turks in particular. The tale, selected from a collection of Ignoz Kunos, is titled "Fear";[5] it proceeds as follows:

I.

([Why youth's father/woman's husband is absent]: Not included)

II.

(1) A woman asked her son to close the door because she had fear. She could not explain what fear was. (2) So, he set out to find out what fear can be.

III.

(1) He met forty fearsome robbers in the mountains but he was not afraid. (2) One of them sent him to the cemetery to make pastry. (2a) A hand reached out from the grave and asked for its share; he struck it with a spoon, thus causing it to disappear. Another robber sent him to a lonely building. (3) He entered and saw on a raised platform (3a) a swing in which "a child was weeping." (3b) A "maiden" approached him and asked that he let her climb upon his shoulders to reach the child. "He consented and the girl mounted," but she pressed his neck with her feet until "he was in danger of strangulation." (3c) However, she jumped down and she disappeared after dropping a bracelet. (3d) The youth took it and left. (4) A Jew claimed that the bracelet was his. The two went to the judge, but neither could prove his claim. (4a) So the judge decided to impound it until either could produce its match as proof of ownership. (5) At the coast, the boy saw a ship tossing to and fro and heard fearful cries. "He quickly divested himself of <43> his clothes, sprang into the water, dived to the bottom of the sea," and found the Daughter-of-the Sea shaking the vessel. "He fell upon

---

Type 872. A Cognitive Behavioristic Analysis of a Middle Eastern Oikotype* (Folklore Monograph Series, no. 8). Bloomington, In., 1979, esp. pp. 3-5.

4 <52>¬ "`ilm al-nafs al-taḥlîlî wa al-folklore" (Psychoanalysis and Folklore). In: *Al-Majallah* (Cairo), vol. 10, no. 117,(September 1966) pp. 33-41. An application of the Jungian approach to the same Turkish tale presents a totally different pattern of affective experiences. The conflict is clearly between good and evil, life and death, individual and society. The youth is also seen as going through the process of "individuation"; the Turkish nation, as represented in the youth triumphs over its 'enemies' through fearless conduct and the use of 'legal' means of resolving conflict with adversaries. (See H. El-Shamy, "al-lashu`ûr al-jamâ`i wa al-folklore" (Collective Unconsciousness and folklore). In: *Al-Majallah*, Vol. 11, no. 126 (Cairo) June, 1967, pp. 21-29.

5 *Forty-Four Turkish Fairy Tales*, (London, 1913) pp. 12-18.

her, flogged her soundly, and drove her away." (6) As he walked he saw a garden in front of which there was a fountain. Three pigeons dived into the water; each was transformed into a maiden. (6a)

They laid a table and drank a toast "to the health" of the youth who had shown no fear. These three maidens were the ones involved. The youth presented himself. "All three maidens hastened to embrace him." He told them about the case of the bracelet "They took him to a cave where a number of stately halls that opened before him overwhelmed him with astonishment." (6b) They gave him the bracelet's match; he took it to the judge, won his case, and hastened back "to the cave." (6c) The maidens told him, "You part from us no more," but he "tore himself away" and left. (7) He came to a spot where there was a crowd. (7a) He was informed that "the shah of the country was no more." A pigeon was to be set loose and he on whose head the bird should alight would be "declared heir to the thrown." Three different pigeons chose the youth, but each time he refused the honor. (7b) "The widow of the late ruler" promised to "show him fear" if he would accept the "dignity for tonight at least." He consented. (8) Soon he learned that "whoever was shah one day was dead the next." (8a) During the night he burned a "coffin" which was being prepared for him, then he slept soundly. In the morning the slaves carried the news that he had survived to the "sultana." (9) The sultana, thereupon, ordered the cook to place "a live sparrow in the soup-dish for supper." Evening came. "The young shah and the sultana sat down for supper." At the sultana's persuasive insistence, the reluctant "youth" lifted the lid off the soup-dish.

IV.

(1) "A bird flew out"; that incident gave him a momentary shock of fear. (2) "Seest Thou!" cried the sultana, "That is fear."

V.

"Then the marriage feast was ordered [...]. The young shah had his mother brought to his palace and *they* lived happily ever after."

For the purpose of comparing various renditions, this focal text may be viewed as composed of five *possible* segments:

Segment I, which would have provided a rationale for the absence of the father (as in the case of the text from Yemen, see *post*) is not included. Segment II describes actions that motivate the youth to seek fear. Segment III provides a variety of supposedly fear-generating experiences--of which only the one dealing with the conflict between the 'youth' and the Jew over the bracelet (III. 3.d, III. 4.a, III. 6.b) seems not to be related to the central quest. Segment IV illustrates the experience that proved instrumental in reducing the motivating force for the quest, and

should have constituted the main reward.[6] Segment V is a sequel to the story.

This Turkish tale is constituted as follows: II.1, 2; III. 1, 2, 2a; 3, 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d; 4, 4a; 5; 6, 6a, 6b, 6c; 7, 7a, 7b; 8, 8a; 9; IV. 1, 2; V.

The text, it was argued, is fraught with sexual symbolism: the open door and the mother's fear; the hand reaching out of the grave and the youth striking it with a spoon; the infant in a swing on a platform in a lonely building and the girl mounting the youth; the ship, the mermaid, and diving to the bottom; the water fountain and the doves turning into maidens; the garden; the maidens in a cave and the stately halls that opened before the youth and overwhelmed him; the live sparrow inside the soup-dish, and the youth's fear caused by its unexpected presence [and flight].

These objects and acts, according to the Freudian view, are symbolic representations of sex organs, sexual intercourse, sexual desire and **fear** (or perhaps, anxiety, a non-cognitive emotion)[7] of that desire and its consequences.

The text also may be seen, it was argued, as cohering around the Oedipus Complex according to which a son harbors an incestuous desire toward his mother and wishes to kill his father. Action in the tale seems to be motivated, non-cognitively, in the <44> direction of the fulfillment of that 'subconscious' need.[8]

> (a) A mother asks her son, as they sat in a room, to close the door because she is afraid but he does not know what fear is. This situation may be interpreted to mean that the "experienced mother" is afraid of the sexual desire between herself and her "inexperienced son."
>
> (b) Once the son sets out to learn what fear is, the mother is dropped out of action and is later replaced by the widow of the shah. It is the shah's widow who succeeds in teaching the youth what fear is, a task begun by the mother. Both the widow and the youth's mother seem to be one and the same character.
>
> (c) There is no mention of the boy's father. Moreover, the paternal figure, represented by the shah, is killed repeatedly.
>
> (d) The youth refuses to live with three beautiful maidens

---

[6] For elaboration on this behavioristic formula see El-Shamy, *Brother and Sister*, pp. 75-77; also see "Causes of Behavior," in H. El-Shamy, "Folkloric Behavior: A Theory for the Study of the Dynamics of Traditional Culture." Ph.D. Dissertation (Bloomington, 1967), pp. 43-59.

[7] See H. El-Shamy "Emotionskomponente," *Enzyklopädie des Märchens*, vol. 3, nos. 4-5, pp. 1391-1395, esp. p. 1392.

[8] See H. El-Shamy, "Behaviorism and the Text" in *Folklore Today. A Festchrift for Richard M. Dorson*, L. Dégh, H. Glassie, F. Oinas, eds. (Bloomington, 1976),pp. 145-160, esp. pp. 146-149.

and--contrary to the dominant narrative traditions of the area, marries a widow.

(e) The ambiguity of the language in the closing statement: "they lived happily ever after," tends to reinforce the argument that the boy's mother and the shah's widow are the same person.

Due to the absence of 'contextual' data relating the contents of the tale to a specific narrator and a certain set of social and cultural conditions, a cognitive behavioristic[9] examination is not feasible; the search for the meaning(s) of this text must remain on the level of abstract culture. Although the narrator's intent[10] in telling the tale is not given, the tale's style and contents indicate that it is a fantasy tale (i.e., magic tale, *Märchen*) narrated for the expressed intent of entertaining. This viewpoint is congruent with Kunos' own characterization of the tale as a true "fairy tale." But the question is: To what extent do the affective components, which seem to generate the postulated Oedipal contents of the text, represent Turkish and other akin Middle Eastern traditional cultures? The answer to the question requires that the text of this rendition of the tale be examined within a broader cultural matrix, particularly as compared to other renditions of the same tale-type in Turkey and neighboring Middle Eastern Islamic countries. A recurrence of the Oedipal pattern in other renditions would increase the likelihood of its presence in the Turkish text.

The tale belongs to AaTh 326, *The Youth Who Wanted to Learn What Fear Is*. In their *Typen Türkischer Volksmärchen*, W. Eberhard and N. Boratav[11] list six occurrences in Turkey of AaTh 326 under their own classificatory number, "Typ 284, Der Held, der keine Furcht kennt." None of these six variants (given in abstract) seems to project an Oedipal pattern of 'emotions.' This pattern is also lacking in a more recent rendition given by a Jewish male informant:[12]

II.

A young fisherman fried a living fish in a pan; (1 variation) his wife became ill from fear. He set out to learn what fear is.

III.

(2) People sent him to the cemetery where he spent the night and prepared an egg for supper. (2a) A hand snatched it away; he prepared a second and when the hand appeared, he trapped it in a sack. In the morning the hand was gone. (3) People sent him to the public bath. (3c) Demons appeared and tried to beat him into the ground. He survived and newspapers wrote about him. (7b) The

---

[9] See note 6 above.

[10] As a criterion for reckoning the genre to which a tale may belong, "the narrator's intent" was introduced in H. El-Shamy's *Folktales of Egypt*, (Chicago, 1980) pp. xliv-xlvi.

[11] (Wiesbaden, 1953).

[12] In Heda Jason, *Märchen aus Israel* (Düsseldorf, 1976) no. 48, pp. 149-151.

king called him and arranged for a supper. (9) All the officials were instructed to lift the lids off their dishes at the sound of a bell.

IV.

(1) A pigeon flew out of the "hero's dish."(2) "'Now I was afraid' declared the horrified lad."

Compared to Kunos' text, this rendition is constituted as follows: II. l (variation: wife not mother), 2; III. 2, 2a, 3 (variation: public bath), 3c, 7b (variation: king, not queen), 9; IV. l, 2 (variation: youth makes the statement). Clearly, no mother or conflict with the father or a paternal figure (e.g., king) over the mother is involved. Thus, in a sample of eight renditions from Turkey, the ratio of the Oedipal to non-Oedipal cases is 1:7

Additionally, the Oedipal pattern fails to materialize in any of the few texts available from neighboring Arab communities, where AaTh 326 is virtually unknown. An Iraqi variant limits the action to the initial quest and a single episode of supposedly fear-generating experiences:

II.

(2) [Mr.] Courageous wanted to find something that would produces fear in a person.

III.

He went to an inn and insisted on spending the night in a room that was never used because whomever slept in it was dead the following day.[13] During the night a headless corpse appeared. It was followed by a head that demanded revenge. The corpse explained that he was the original owner of the inn but his wife conspired with her lover, the servant, and murdered him and buried the corpse in the room. They also prevented his faithful dog from visiting the room. This same event was repeated the following night. The next night the governor sent the chief of police with Courageous, and the same things happened. The dog showed them the spot where the corpse was buried. The owner of the inn and his wife were tortured until they confessed.

IV.

Courageous stated, "Now I have known the meaning of fear."

With reference to Kunos's text, this rendition proceeds as follows: II. 2; III. (new component);IV. Again this tale deals overtly with husband-wife negative

[13] This theme of the hero surviving a night in a mill (or a bathhouse, etc.) is recurrent and is typically associated with Arab renditions of AaTh 910K, *The Precepts and the Uriah Letter*; this narrative also deals with a faithless wife.

relationships. No Oedipal setting is projected.

A text from Qatar,[14] on the Arab Gulf, contains elements of AaTh 326, and seems to be related to the Turkish or Iraqi renditions. This text--narrated by a twenty-one year old male student who had heard it from his father--is fragmentary and incoherent; the theme of learning fear appears only implicitly:

I
(Absent)

II
(Absent)

III

Three strong men agreed to go to the cemetery (2, new element).

The First tried to hammer a nail between two graves; his flowing sleeve was caught on the nail. He thought that the "Grave-people" (i.e., the dead) had grasped him. He tore himself away and told his friends (2a). They asked the second to cook in the cemetery. As he was cooking, one of his friends came to him while disguised as a dead person holding a skillet, and asked for food. He told [the disguised person] that the food has not reached the living and was not afraid (2-3a,b,c fused).

They asked the third to bring a nail from the room [in the cemetery, used for washing corpses]. When he went there, a piece from a child's hand was thrown on him; he kept on going and was not afraid. Other parts [from the boy's body] were thrown on him, and he was not afraid. When he opened the door to the room, he found a woman, who had given birth to a child, and was throwing parts [of its corpse on him]. She told him that she "made a mistake," became pregnant, and gave birth to that child. She asked that she keep her secret and not defame her. He agreed, took the parts of the boy's corpse, wrapped them in a *ghutrah/ghitrah* (head-scarf) and buried them.

He told his friends. They thanked him for his [good] deed and left.

<46>

IV
(Absent)

V
(Absent)

Compared to Kunos's text, this rendition is constituted as follows: III.2 (new

[14] In M.T. al-Duwaik, *al-Qaṣaṣ al-sha`bî fî Qaṭar*, vol. 2, (Doha, Arab Gulf States Folklore Centre, 1984), p. 293.

component), 2a, 2-3a, b, c (fused), (a new condition).

Although the tale expresses fear of illicit sex and pregnancy represented by a "*woman*" murdering and dismembering her child, no Oedipal components may be postulated for this Qatari text. There is no father-figure. There is no mother-figure; there are no symbolic maternal links between the fallen "woman" and the youth who helped her. Additionally, the camaraderie ["comradry"] among the three friends, who may be seen symbolically as brothers, nullifies any possibility of the existence of sibling rivalry over the mother.

A rendition from Yemen[15] appears to be quite similar to Kunos' Turkish text; it also begins with an Oedipal-like situation:

I.

(1) There were a man and a woman. The woman begat a son. (2) The father died and the baby grew up.

II.

The mother and her son used to spend evenings at the neighbors chatting. (1) One evening after their return, she asked him to close the door because she was afraid. (2 var.) Since she could not explain fear, she sent him out to learn it.

III.

(1a) A man sent him to a house where he met an old man. The old man could not show him fear, but told him to wait. (l) Seven robbers came, but he was not afraid. (3) They sent him to the public bath (3b var.) There he met an old woman who claimed to be looking for her daughter's comb in a niche in the wall. (3c) To reach the niche, the youth allowed her to climb on his back but she tried to drive him into the ground. He knocked her down. (3d) She left him a bracelet. The robbers sent him to the hills from which no one had returned, (2) and asked him to prepare pastry. (2d) In the cemetery a woman's hand reached out of a grave and asked for some pastry. He struck it with the spoon and it disappeared. (1) The robbers told him "We are the greatest fear!" (2c, new element: the youth and the robbers are referred to as brothers). He and his 'brothers' went to a spot at the sea[shore], where a pretty and fair complected girl was terrorizing and drowning people. He went into the water after her, drove her away and threatened her with death. He and his 'brothers' went to another place. (1d, new element of 1c); five of them died there. (4) The youth wanted to sell the bracelet to a Jew, but the Jew claimed it was his. (4a) They went to the *`âmil*

[15] In Ettore Rossi, *L'Arabo parlato A San`a'* (Rome, 1939), pp. 81-86. (I am grateful to Regina Bendix of Indiana University for providing me with an English translation of Rossi's Italian translation of the Arabic text. The resume' given here is derived from the Arabic, pp. 81-83.

(i.e., governor, sheriff), who decided it belonged to one who could produce its match. (6) Under a tree he came across a subterranean place. (6a) He entered it, found three chairs. and hid himself. Three *banât* (i.e., girls, maidens) appeared; they were the ones he had faced in the bathhouse, the cemetery, and the sea. The youngest asked the elder two each to tell her life story; (6d: new) they addressed each other as "sister." (6e) The eldest said that in her earlier life she had died and was buried.[16] She told about her encounter with the youth in the bathhouse. The middle sister (maiden) also died and was buried. She told about her encounter with the youth at the cemetery. The youngest told about her encounter with the youth in the sea. All three declared their love to the youth. When he revealed himself, (6c) each wanted him for a husband. (cf. V) He stated: "This[17] is my wife, as for the other two I have two brothers [one for each]; (6b) but I desire the match of the bracelet." They all left together.

V.

He gave the two girls to his two "brothers" as <47> wives. (III. 6b)
They went to the *`âmil* and won their case against the Jew, who did not come back.

Compared to Kunos' text, this rendition is constituted as follows: I. l, 2; II. l, 2 (var.: the mother sends her son after fear); III. 1a (discontinued), 1, 3, 3b (var.: old woman, later is "young" woman), 3c, 3d, 2, 2a, 1, 2c (new): 1d (new:robbers' number dwindles), 4, 4a, 6, 6a, 6d, (new: the maidens may be sisters), 6e, (new: reincarnation or a similar belief), 6c, 6b;. IV. is missing; V. (var.: marriage to a young woman); III. 6b.

In spite of its Oedipal-like initial situation, this Yemenite rendition, which was almost certainly narrated by an adult male,[18] followed a non-Oedipal course of action. The mother-and-son theme was abandoned, and so was the theme of learning what fear is. The tale, unlike Kunos' Turkish rendition, concluded with the youth marrying one of the three maidens, (most likely the youngest)[19] and giving the other two to the surviving two 'brothers.' Thus, in addition to the lack of conflict between son and father over the mother, no sibling rivalry over the

---

[16] This element depicting a dead person simply coming back to life to live *another* life-span is highly unusual and is incongruent with the religious and folk belief systems of the area. Yet, the theme of a murdered person being brought back to life either via 'magic water' or a series of transformations into other forms of life is recurrent. For examples see H. El- Shamy, *Folktales of Egypt*, p. 243, and pp. 282-283.

[17] Evidently the narrator must have used a gesture or other non-verbal narrative device to indicate the youth's choice , signified by the word "This [one]"; no explanation was provided by Rossi. It may, however, be assumed that the youth chose the youngest, not only because such a choice is typical, but also she is the one singled out as the leader, and was described as beautiful and fair complected.

[18] Rossi indicated that he interviewed an imam (a Moslem clergyman), See *L'Arabo*, p. VI.

[19] See note 16 above.

mother, or a mother-figure, may be postulated.[20]

There is also evidence suggesting that the very Turkish text in question loses its Oedipal character in the Arab milieu. An Egyptian tale[21] certainly seems to be derived from the text included in El-Shamy's study.[22] At the time of its publication in 1977, that tale was the *only* known occurrence in Egypt of AaTh 326. The narrator was a twenty-two year old young woman who belonged to a family of professional singers and entertainers; although she was illiterate, her father, mentor, and head of the singing troupe--and the probable source for the tale--could read and write.

Under the unspecific but typical title: "Clever Mohammad," the tales goes as follows:

I.

After thirty years of marriage, an abused childless wife was divorced. A physician told her that she was pregnant. Upon learning this her husband restored her as his wife and treated her well. "*Es-sitt di kânit khayfa-m-el- welâdah 'awi* (That lady was very afraid of childbirth)" but God was kind to her; she gave birth to a baby boy.

II.

(3, new element) The boy grew up, but he failed at school. His father became irritated, "hated him" and told him, "You have wasted my wealth. Look at your [successful] peers," and ordered him to leave the house. So he did.

III.

(1-2) The boy met robbers and joined them as cook. They wanted to kill him but felt it would be sinful. (2a) As he was cooking meat, a *jinniyya* (i.e., a female jini, a spirit) came out of the grave and asked for a piece. He held her by her hair and beat her up. She declared that she would not return. The robbers told him "that was nothing," so he got upset and left them. (5) He came to a ship stuck in the middle of the river; a *`afreeta* (i.e., female afreet, a spirit) was standing in the middle of the stream blocking the ship's path. He was told, "She wanted one of the passengers." He had himself

---

[20] From a Freudian perspective, it may be argued that one of the *two elder* reincarnated "girls" is a symbolic representation of the forgotten mother. Such an argument, however, could not be substantiated by the existence of similarities between the two figures, or an attraction on the part of the youth to an older woman, or a mother figure.

[21] F.A. Faraj, *Al-Qasas al-Sha`bî fî al-Daqahliyya* (Folk Narratives in Daqahliyya [Province, Egypt]), Cairo, 1977, pp. 105-110.

[22] See note 4 above.

thrown "on her hair"; he got hold of her hair, twisted it and beat her up. She promised not to be seen again. (10, new element; cf. III. 7 and III. 6) He came to a king's palace. The king had daughters but did not like strangers [who might propose to them].[23] (cf. III. 3,8) There was a bathhouse; whoever slept in it was found dead the following day. The youth was taken to bathe. [A female jini, or *`afrîta* came out][24] and he evicted her from the bath. (11, new development) The king's daughter saw him; "She liked him and he liked her." He told her father, "I fell in love with your daughter." (cf. III. 3d) The youth happened to have an ankle-bracelet. He sold it for 100 pounds, which he used to 'pin the princess' but her father asked for the match of that ankle-bracelet as the *mahr* (dowry, bride-price)[25] for his daughter. (6) In the "mountain" the youth found [the] three *`afareet* [i.e., supernatural female spirits]; he grabbed the one with the matching ankle- bracelet. (cf. III. 6b) Under the threat of death she gave him her ankle-bracelet; he took it to the king and said, "Here is your daughter's dowry."

<48>

IV.
(Absent)

V. (Independent Development)

He married her; she stayed with him until he became poor. She was forced to do [menial] work and beg; yet she never complained[26] or went to [seek help from] her father. Her husband said to her, "I've grown tired of you" and divorced her. She had had children by him. She went to her father's [home], lived there, and the children grew up. Meanwhile he [the husband] became an old, worn-out man. She sent her children to school. The children turned out well and made their mother rich. Still, she arranged for them to have good marriages.

Compared to Kunos' text, this rendition is constituted as follows: I (introduction, new elements); II. 3 (new elements); III. 1-2, 2, 2a, 5, 10 (new elements comparable to III. 7 and III. 6; cf. III. 3 and 8; 11 new development, cf. III. 3d, 6, cf. III. 6b; IV (learning fear is absent; V. (Independent development).

---

[23] A father's arbitrary delay or blockage of his daughter's marriage and ensuing conflict is a recurrent theme in Arabic tales, e.g., see El-Shamy, *Folktales of Egypt*, p. 54, and p. 251.

[24] See note 13 above.

[25] So me typical steps in the marriage ritual are as follows: 'to speak for,' to engage (usually by giving a valuable piece of jewelry); paying the *mahr* ('bride-wealth,' inaccurately referred to as 'bride-price'); 'writing the contract'; and 'entry' (consummation of marriage).

[26] The narrator's parlance here suggests that she is influenced by narrative and verbal formulae from the ballad of Job, one of the stories typically performed by bards. Job's wife had to sustain the humiliation of poverty and begging.

The text from Egypt assumes an affective pattern radically different from that of Kunos' text. The theme of learning fear associated with mother-son companionship is lacking. The conflict is between husband and wife over the bearing of [male] children. The conflict between 'the youth' and his father is not over the boy's mother, but concerning the son's failure at school, social prestige, and financial matters. The cycle of conflict between husband and wife is repeated between the 'youth' and his own wife. In spite of the wife's ideal background, noble conduct, fertility, and the fact that her husband was once 'in love' with her, she was divorced. The wife's return to her father's house, along with the children, for financial aid and protection is a typical social practice in Arab societies. It is also congruent with the fact that the narrator of the tale is a *female* (perhaps expressing her own apprehensions about her own future as a wife). This return of a daughter to her father's home does not seem to have any erotic significance; also it is not inclusive since other 'daughters' of the king and the heroine's own children would be present. Additionally, the youth does not return to his mother; presumably she remained with her husband. No Oedipus Complex is expressed in this Egyptian rendition.

The Oedipal pattern, which the Turkish text so explicitly and vividly portrays, does not appear in any of the available variants. Considering the scarcity of Oedipus-type tales in Turkey[27] and other Middle Eastern Arab cultures[28] , it is likely that its appearance in Kunos's text is an idiosyncratic case representing an individual narrator. It also is likely that the Oedipal pattern was generated by Kunos, the European collector-editor of the text. Clearly influenced by the "theory"[29] that true *Märchen* (fairy tales) were found only among select ethnic groups, Kunos prefaced his Turkish collection with the 'complementary' view that:

> These tales are by no means identical with, nor do they even resemble those others that have been assimilated by the European consciousness from Indian sources and the "Arabian Nights." All real Turkish fairy tales are quite independent of those; rather are they related to the Western type so far as their contents and structure are concerned. Indeed, they may only be placed in the category of Oriental tales in that they are permeated with the cult [!] of Islam and that their characters are Moslems.[30]

---

[27] The appearance of AaTh 931, *Oedipus* in Turkey seems to be quite rare. Eberhard and Boratav (see note 11 above) cite only one occurrence of AaTh 931 under their own Type no. 142. Their table of the most recurrent tale-types (no. 3, p. 9) suggests that the Brother-Sister theme (AaTh 707) is the most frequent.

[28] See H. El-Shamy "The Brother-Sister Syndrome in Arab Family Life. Socio-cultural Factors in Arab Psychiatry: A Critical Review." In: *International Journal of Sociology of the Family*, vol. 11, no. 2 (1981), M.C. Kennedy, ed., pp. 313-323.

[29] See for example, C.W. Von Sydow, "Das Märchen als indogermanische Tradition (Auszug) übertragen von Lily Weiser," *Niederdeutsche Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* Vol. IV (1926), pp. 207-215.

[30] Kunos, *Forty-Four Turkish Fairy Tales*, p. ix.

Thus, the argument that the Turkish text in question represents Turkish culture, or Arab cultures, should be judged as having a low degree of validity.

Another Middle Eastern case is an anthropological treatment of a narrative collected from the city of Taroudannt in Southern Morocco. In the context of examining male and female relations, Daisy H. Dwyer presents the tale, which she collected.[31] The story may be summarized as follows:

> A murderer of 99 persons needed another victim <49> to finish 100. One day a guest (actually a saint) stopped by the murderer's house and asked for shelter. The murderer's wife warned the guest about her husband, but he persisted; she hid him in a well.
>
> The husband returned and sensed that someone had been at his home. At first the wife denied anyone has been there, but she later admitted the presence of the guest. The husband asked the guest to climb out. He did so while mentioning the name of God, an act which impressed the murderer. The host "sacrificed" a ram for his guest [i.e., killed a ram in his honor to feed him]. Later on, he confided to his guest that he wanted to repent and find God. The guest told him to go out and look for God; by God's command, the guest brought the eaten ram back to life.
>
> On his way to find God, the murderer first met a poor thief lying in the sand; then he met a second thief who had stolen mats from the mosque, and lastly, he came to a hermit who had been worshipping God for forty years. The hermit received additional rations from God intended for the guest (the murderer). But he hid the good stuff and offered his guest lesser food. Each of the three asked the murderer to ask God whether they each will be admitted to Paradise. Finally, the murderer met with an angel who took the question to God. God's answer was that the two thieves and the murderer would be forgiven and would enter Paradise. The hermit would not enter Paradise but would occupy the spot in Hell that had been previously reserved for the murderer because the hermit hid the food that God had sent for the guest.

For anthropologist Dwyer, the meaning of this narrative lies in its expression of a male's desire to be independent of a female. Thus, she postulates:

> The murderer's quest for Allah [i.e., God], like other affirmations of male religiosity, brings the chain of lessening male dependence upon women to a close. In early childhood a boy is totally dependent upon mother, grandmother, or sister. In adolescence, he partially asserts his independence from family, but then immediately falls into dependence upon other women, the objects

---

[31] *Images and Self-Images, Male and Female in Morocco* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1978), pp. 103-104.

> of his sexual desires. His sexuality leaves him shackled whether within or outside the bounds of marriage. Indeed, it is only when women's influence is willfully restricted through a heightened realization of God's prior importance that men can reach the rarely achievable state of self-awareness that the murderer attains.[32]

An examination of this postulate about the meaning of the Moroccan story should help in determining the degree of its validity. Dwyer does not cite a source for her "tale" other than the statement that all her texts were collected from sources comprising "Both males and females, aged approximately 7 to 70;"[33] she typically substantiates specific pieces of information or interpretations through such unspecific attributions as "informants state," and "informants declare."[34]

The questions here are: To what extent does Dwyer's text represent Moroccan traditional culture and does this text actually portray "a male's desire to be independent of females"? The answers to these inquiries may be sought in other renditions of the narrative, in Taroudannt and other communities in Southern Morocco, and in the surrounding regions as well.

Dwyer's text is a combination of two independent stories. One belongs to AaTh 756C, *The Greater Sinner* and the other belongs to AaTh 751D*, *St. Peter Blesses Hospitable Thieves* (a variant on the second tale-type is AaTh 750E*, *Hospitality and Sin*, in which one act of hospitality outweighs a life of sin). Both narratives are widespread; they often appear as religious didactic stories (i.e., exempla) or legends and demonstrate a high degree of stability throughout the Muslim world. "The Greater Sinner" (AaTh 756C) is typically told to illustrate that although Islam stipulates that God will not forgive premeditated murder, under certain circumstances this doctrine can be mediated, repealed, or even suspended.[35] The typical act that warrants the forgiving of 99 murders is predominantly the killing of a would-be necrophiliac. This very act was also reported from Morocco in association with a saint (Sidi Ali es-Sanh'adj), whose one hundredth <50> victim was a man trying to sexually violate the corpse of "une jeune-fille." This Moroccan legend, like its Egyptian counterpart, for example, accounts for the origin of the saint's nickname: "Bouloufa (Pére de l'acquittement."[36] In Dwyer's text, as with a number of other variants from Morocco and neighboring North African countries (se e.g., J. Scelles-Millie; E. Chementi, and E. Dermenghem),[37] the murderer of 99 is forgiven for merely seeking God, an act that is congruent with the overall pattern of meaning for the narrative and its variants in the area. The granting of forgiveness and redemption

---

[32] Dwyer, *Images*, p. 105.

[33] Dwyer, *Images*, p. xii.

[34] For example, see Dwyer, *Images*, p. 102, p. 117, p. 144.

[35] See El-Shamy, *Folktales of Egypt*, p. 133.

[36] R. Basset, "Contes et légends arabes" in *Revue des Traditions Populaires*, vol. 25 (1910), pp. 141-142.

[37] See El-Shamy, *Folktales of Egypt*, p. 270.

to thieves (AaTh 751D*) illustrates the paramount importance of hospitality. While theft, even from a mosque, is forgivable, inhospitality, even by a devout worshipper is intolerable and its negative value is viewed as equaling or even exceeding that of murder.

It should be concluded that the text in question is representative of the general tradition of the Moroccan South. However, the meaning postulated by Dwyer concerning a male's desire to be independent of females fails to appear in any of the variants. Thus it lacks the systemic qualities of consonance and consistency, and should, therefore, be considered as having a low degree of validity.

The third case is a morphological study dealing with the nature and meaning of acts attributed to a specific tale character (persona, or actor) in an East African tale. The author, Lee Haring[38] secured the text in question from a Kamba informant; it may be summarized as follows:

> The crocodile asked the monkey to visit him and offered to carry the monkey, who could not swim, on his own back. On the way the crocodile felt hungry and asked the monkey for his heart to eat. The monkey told the crocodile that, as the custom requires he had left his heart at home. The crocodile agreed that they should go back to the monkey's home.
>
> When they reached the shore, the monkey climbed into a mango tree. He threw mangoes and the crocodile dived into the water.

Since this Kamba tale contains acts that Haring perceived as constituting 'trickery,' he classified it as belonging "to the familiar genre of trickster stories." Consequently, the nature of the relationship between the two protagonists was judged-- in accordance with how Africans view such a relationship--to be "False Friendship" rather than "Friendship." Haring argued that the "trickster"/"False Friendship" combination elicits a certain morphological pattern of "motifemic sequence," characteristic of "many people of African origin."[39] The question is: To what extent does the tale represent the category of narratives that constitute the trickster cycle? An examination of this Kamba tale, within the broader context of its typological and genre characteristics and culture-matrix, should help clarify whether it is actually a trickster story.

The text in question belongs to AaTh 91, *Monkey (Cat) Who Left His Heart at Home*. Although this tale-type is known in Europe, it often is associated with Asian and Middle Eastern literary works, (e.g., Penzer, *The Ocean of Stories*, and the Arabic, *Kalilah wa- Dimnah*);[40] where the story appears as a moralistic animal tale

---

[38] "A Characteristic African Folktale Pattern," in *African Folklore*, R.M. Dorson, ed. (New York, 1972), pp. 165-179.

[39] Haring, "A Characteristic Pattern," p.165, p. 166.

[40] See N.M. Penzer, *The Ocean of Story: being C.H. Tawney's translation of Somadeva's Katha Sarit*

(i.e., fable). Another East African version of AaTh 91, secured from the Island of Zanzibar[41] exhibits clear affinity to the Arabic literary work *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, including a moralistic ending and the formal trait of being a component in a frame-story. A monkey and a shark, neither of whom is perceived as a trickster, are the protagonists in the Swahili rendition. Also, an examination of a representative sample of Kamba narrative repertoire reveals that neither the monkey nor the crocodile recur in the narrative traditions of the Akambas. Moreover, neither animal appears in the role of trickster. Gerhard Lindblom's[42] collection of 30 "animal tales" contains the following beings--<51> given here in the order of the frequency of their occurrence: Hyena: 12, Hare: 9, Lion: 8, Crow: 3, Cock: 3, Elephant: 3. Other animals and birds, each appearing once, are: Fowl, Guinea-fowl, Bird, Hippopotamus, Baboon, Tortoise, Chameleon. Insects, each appearing once, include: Ants, Butterflies, Beetles, Lice.

Similarly, John Mbiti's[43] more recent collection containing 78 narratives projects the same pattern in which neither the crocodile nor the monkey seems to play the institutionalized role of the trickster. "Not every act of trickery qualifies its perpetrator as a 'trickster.'"[44]

Thus, the perception of either the crocodile or the monkey as a trickster in the Kamba text in question lacks the systemic qualities of consonance and consistency. The morphological qualities Haring postulated for the tale as a consequence of the presence of the "trickster," should, therefore, be viewed as having a low degree of validity.

The last case deals with the importance of the verbatim accuracy of a text in determining the meaning involved, and consequently its genre and position within the broader cultural matrix. In his work titled "A Classification of Folktales of Northern East African Cattle Area By Types," E. O. Arewa[45] cites a story collected from the Yao (then of Nyasaland) under number 3765 of his own classification schema, and assigns it to motif C901.1.1 "Tabu imposed on son by father before death." The tale was, therefore, perceived as an "Ordinary Tale," pertaining to the theme "Disobedience Punished." The story, originally published by Hugh Stannus,[46] states that the dying father told his son:

> "Three things I wish you to beware of doing. Firstly do not tell your wife your private affairs; secondly, do not make friends with a policeman; thirdly, do not borrow money from a poor man, but

---

Sagara. 10 vols., London, 1923ff., vol. 5, 127, n. 1; and Victor Chauvin, *Bibliographie des ouvrages arabes ou relatifs aux arabes* (Liége, 1892-1922), vol. 2, p. 99, no. 57.

41 George W. Bateman, *Zanzibar Tales* (Chicago, 1969), no. 1.

42 *Kamba Folklore*, pt. I, *Tales of Animals* (Uppsala, 1928).

43 *Akamba Stories* (Oxford, 1966).

44 H. El-Shamy, *Folktales of Egypt*, p. 219.

45 Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 1967.

46 "The Wayao of Nyasaland," *Harvard African Studies*, vol. 3 (1922), pp. 337-338.

> from a rich man." The son thought he would "try and see whether there was any wisdom in [his father's advice]. He acted contrary to his father's counsel. The results proved the wisdom of the father."

Since a tabu is a supernatural prohibition which, if violated, will result in a supernatural penalty,[47] clearly no tabu is involved here. The Yao text represents a realistic story (i.e., a novella) and is sometimes used as a didactic narrative. It belongs to the general narrative cycle designated under AaTh 910, *Precepts Bought or Given Prove Correct*. However, this text reflects more accurately the contents of the subsidiary tale- type AaTh 911*, *The Dying Father's Counsel*, a maverick classification that Aarne-Thompson *The Types of the Folktale* needlessly sets apart from the context of its broader narrative cycle, Type 910. When thus identified, the Yao tale becomes a part of the larger Arab-African tradition that extends from Southern Arabia to the Western Coast of Africa. A father's supernatural prohibition and ensuing supernatural punishment are not to be found in this Tale-type: 911*, including the Yao variant.

Therefore, the characterization of the text as dealing with "tabu" and punishment for tabu-breaking lacks the systemic qualities of consonance and consistency and should be judged inaccurate.

The four above cases presented demonstrate the high degree of interdependence between the affective experience that a narrative generates on the one hand, and the perceived characteristics of the genre and the tale-type to which the narrative is assigned and the broader cultural matrix on the other. The actual message or messages (i.e., meaning, feeling, etc.) a folk narrative is assumed to impart, cognitively or non-cognitively, is a property that also must be found in the majority of the tale's variants. Thus, the meaning of one folkloric text, or of an aspect thereof, is the total sum of the relevant meanings found in the other renditions of that text. Each rendition being inseparable from its teller and from the conditions under which it has been told.

---

[47] See R. Beal and H. Hoijer, *An Introduction to Anthropology* (New York, 1965) pp. 571-572.